



In early 2009, Gary Yara was working as a satellite dish installer, but he wasn't satisfied and started looking for a better-paying job that could make a positive impact on people's lives. The 42-year-old from Aurora found that opportunity as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. He was hired in July 2009 by Arapahoe County as a weatherization technician. Because of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Arapahoe County is significantly increasing the number of homes to be served with

energy efficiency improvements. The county will weatherize about 1125 homes this year, compared to 680 last year.

The job provides a higher salary so that Mr. Yara can support his wife and two children. It also gives him a much stronger sense of personal satisfaction. Each weekday, he works in homes of low-income families and individuals to make the homes more energy efficient.

"This job is more satisfying. The service you give people is great," Mr. Yara said.

Mr. Yara said the people who receive the free weatherization work are surprised that they can get this service at no charge.

The homeowners "are excited and very thankful," he said.

Most importantly, Mr. Yara said this job gives him a more positive outlook on his future career. He said the skills he learned in this job will help him find more work in the future.

"It's job security."

In early 2009, Jason Radaelli was worried that he would be out of work. He had been working for two years in the maintenance department of Arapahoe County when the position was in danger of being eliminated. Instead of being laid-off, Mr. Radaelli, 40, of Denver, applied to work in the county's weatherization department, and was hired in July 2009.



"It's great. I like being on the road, going to different places everyday and not being stuck at my desk," Mr. Radaelli said.

He said most of the homeowners are grateful for the improvements in their homes. "It's saving money for homeowners and it's also cutting energy usage across the whole state."

Mr. Radaelli expressed appreciation for the fact that his job is paid for by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"I think (the Recovery Act) is great," said Mr. Radaelli. "My background training was in heating and air conditioning. I knew the (Recovery Act) money was coming and I knew this was the field to get into."

The job also "is a step forward to something bigger."



Hazel Johnson lives in a small, 3-bedroom home in Aurora that was built in 1952 and has little insulation in the back bedroom, causing a strong draft during cold weather.

“In the back, that room is always cold,” she said.

Ms. Johnson, 65, works part-time as a nursing assistant at a senior home. She often takes care of her grandchildren. On days that her grandchildren are around, she turns up the heat to keep the house warmer. And that means higher heating bills, with some months costing her \$165.

“The heating bills can be a hardship because my income is not that much. If something happened that I wasn’t able to work, I definitely wouldn’t be able to pay the utility bills,” she said.

Ms. Johnson said she was complaining to a neighbor about her high heating bills when he asked her why she didn’t apply for the weatherization work. “I asked him how to do it and he said ‘Call the county,’” Ms. Johnson said. She was approved and put on the waiting list.

In December 2009, a team from Arapahoe County came to her house to add insulation in the walls and attic, fix air leakages, seal ducts in the floors and install a new, energy-efficient refrigerator. The work is worth about \$6,000 but Ms. Johnson won’t have to pay a cent.

The weatherization work “will be a great benefit,” she said.

“The stimulus is helping to keep house warm and it’s saving me some money.”